SHANKARACHARYA

PHILOSOPHER

AND

MYSTIC

By

KASHINATH

TRIAMBAK

TELANG

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PHILOSOPHER AND MYSTIC

BY

KĀSHĪNĀṬH ṬRIAMBAK ṬELANG, M.A., LL.B.,

Late Judge, Bombay High Court; Late President, Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society; Author of GLEANINGS FROM MAHRATTA CHRONICLES; *Translator of* BHAGAVAḌ-GĪṬĀ, *etc.*

WITH A NOTE

BY

ANNIE BESANT, P.T.S.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
PUBLISHER'S PREFACE	i
SHAṄKARĀCHĀRYA: PHILOSOPHER AND MYSTIC .	1
NOTES BY K. T. ṬELANG	33
NOTE BY ANNIE BESANT	37

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

Kāshīnāth Ṭriambak Ṭelang, the late Judge of the Bombay High Court, a deep scholar, a true patriot, and a large-hearted philanthropist was a sympathiser with the work of the Theosophical Society and a friend of the founders, Madame H. P. Blavatsky and Colonel H. S. Olcott. He was born in 1850 into a high family of the Sārasvaṭ Gaud Brāhmaṇa caste and was educated in Bombay at the Elphinstone High School and the Elphinstone College. He was a keen student of English literature, philosophy and political economy and became an accomplished speaker and writer. He was a proficient Samskṛṭ scholar and one volume in the *Sacred Books of the East*—containing admirable translations of the *Bhagavaḍ-Gīṭā*, *Sanaṭsujāṭīya* and *Anu-Gīṭā*—stands to his credit and will go down to posterity as a monument to his deep scholarship. His learned contributions to the *Indian Antiquary* and his *Gleanings from Mahratta Chronicles* are full of instructive hints and suggestions. He was at one time the President of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

In 1871 he read before the Students' Literary and Scientific Society a very interesting paper on Shaṅkarāchārya; he had also other valuable notes and material on that obscure subject which, with the paper, were rescued from oblivion by Colonel Olcott and published in 1879 in *The Theosophist* (Vol. I, pp. 71, 89 and 203). The essay is admirable and contains valuable information; and its publication in this permanent form will be, it is hoped, appreciated.

SHAṄKARĀCHĀRYA, PHILOSOPHER AND MYSTIC

I MIGHT well plead the multitudinous engagements of a busy professional and literary life as an excuse for not complying with the request to briefly notice in *The Theosophist* the incidents of Shaṅkarāchārya's illustrious career. But I am, first and last, a Hiṇḍū, and my sympathies and humble co-operation are pledged in advance to every legitimate attempt to elucidate the history of India, or better the intellectual condition of my countrymen. From the earliest time the study of philosophy and metaphysics has been prized and encouraged in this country, and, high above all other names in its history, are written those of our people who have aimed to help men to clearer thinking upon the subjects embraced in those categories, whether by their writings,

discourses or example. The life which forms my present theme is the life of one of the greatest men who have appeared in India. Whether we consider his natural abilities, his unselfish devotion to the cause of religion, or the influence he has exerted upon his countrymen, this splendid ascetic stands *facile princeps*.

So enchanting, in fact, are all his surroundings, that it is no wonder that the admiration of an astonished people should have euhemerized him into an incarnation of the Deity. Our ignoble human nature seems ever so conscious of its own weakness and imperfection as to be prone to deify whosoever exemplifies its higher aspirations; as though the keeping of him on the human plane made other men seem meaner and more little by contrast.

Shaṅkarāchārya's biographers apotheosised their hero, as Alexander's and Cicero's and those of Apollonius, Jesus and Muhammed did theirs. They made his advent presaged by a heavenly vision—of Mahāḍeva, to his father, Sivaguru—and his career attended by miracles which no theory of interior, or

psychical, development can cover. A lenient posterity may well pass over these pious embellishments as the fruit of an exuberant partiality, for after all these have been stripped away the true grandeur of the paṇḍiṭ, philosopher and mystic is only the more plainly revealed to us.

We are, unfortunately, without the necessary data to enable us to precisely fix the epoch in which this great teacher flourished. Some ascribe it to the second century before, others would bring him down to the tenth after Christ. Most modern scholars agree in locating him in the eighth century of the Christian era; and, since we have for this opinion the concurrent authority of Wilson, Colebrooke, Rāmmohan Roy, Yajñēshvar Shāsṭri, and Professor Jayanārāyan Ṭarkapañchānan, the Bengali editor of Ānanḍagiri's *Shaṅkara Vijaya*, and as it is less important, after all, to know when he taught, than what he taught and did, we may as well accept that decision without debate. No more certainly can his birthplace be determined. As seven cities competed for the honour of having produced a Homer,

so five biographers ascribe his nativity to as many different localities. Shṛṅgēri is commonly believed to have been the favoured town[1]; but a passage from the *Shivarahasya*, quoted in the *Kavicharitra*, would indicate a town in the Kērala district, named Sasalagrāma[2]; Ānanḍagiri's life of Shaṅkara names Chiḍambarapura[3]; Māḍhav puts forward Kālati[4]; and lastly, Yajñēshvar Shāstri, in his *Āryaviḍyā Suḍhākara*, tells us that Shaṅkara first saw the light at Kalpi[5].

Even if we do not believe the stories of the portents and wonders said to have occurred in the animal and vegetable kingdoms at his birth—such as the fraternising together of beasts ordinarily hostile to each other, the uncommon pellucidity of the streams, the preternatural shedding of

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[1] See Paṇḍiṭ K. V. Rāmasvāmi's sketches, p. 4, and the map at the end of the book.

[2] *Kavicharitra*, p. 3, line 17.

[3] Pp. 9 and 19. It may be added here that I have grave doubts as to the *Shaṅkara Vijaya*, published at Calcutta, being really a work of Ananḍagiri, the pupil of Shaṅkara.

[4] Māḍhavāchārya, ii. 3.

[5] P. 226.

fragrance by trees and plants, nor of the joy of the Upaniṣhaṭs, nor the glad pæans of the whole celestial host; we yet know for certain that our hero, at an early age, displayed a most wonderful precocity. In his first year he acquired the Samskṛṭ alphabet and his own language; at two, learned to read; at three, studied the Kāvyas and Purāṇas—and understood many portions of them by intuition[1]. Ānanḍagiri, less circumstantial, merely states that Shaṅkara became conversant with Prākṛṭ Māgaḍha and Samskṛṭ languages even in shaishava, infancy.

Having studied the Iṭihāsa, the Purāṇas, the *Mahābhāraṭa*, the Smṛṭis and the Shāsṭras, Shaṅkara, in his seventh year, returned from his preceptor to his own home. Māḍhav narrates that the mother of his hero being, one day, overpowered by the debility resulting from the austerities she had practised before his birth, to propitiate the gods and make them grant her prayer for a son, as well as by the

[1] Māḍhav, iv. 1—3.

torrid heat of the sun, fainted; whereupon Shaṅkara, finding her in the swoon, not only brought her back to consciousness but also caused the river to rise, thereby cooling the air for her, a circumstance which of course spread his fame as a thaumaturgist far and wide! The King of Kērala vainly offering him presents of gold and elephants, through his own minister, came himself to pay reverence, and disclosing his longing for a son like himself, was made happy by the sage, who taught the king privately the rites to be performed in such cases. I must not lose the opportunity to point out, in passing, the two things implied in this biographical scrap, *viz.*, that[1] it was believed that the birth of progeny might be brought about by the recitation of manṭrams and the performance of ceremonial rites, and[2] that the secret is never publicly taught, but privately conveyed from adept to disciple. I shall not dwell upon these facts but leave them to be disposed of as they will

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[1] Mādhav, v. i. Compare Ānanḍagiri p. 11.

[2] Mādhav, v. 59.

by our new friends, the Theosophists, for whom the mystical side of nature offers most enticements.

About this same time, the great sage Agastya, visiting Shaṅkara with other sages, prophesied to his mother that he would die at the age of thirty-two. Feeling that this world is all a passing show, this boy of eight years determined to embrace the life of a holy Sannyāsi, but his mother objected, her motherly pride doubtless craving that her son should, in his turn, beget a son, to inherit his own greatness of soul and mind. The lad's determination was not to be shaken, however, and the maternal consent was obtained, as the biographers tell us, by the working of a miracle[1]. Bathing in the river one day, his foot was caught by an alligator. He wailed so loud that his mother ran to the spot, and, being told that the alligator would not leave go his hold until she had agreed to her son's becoming an ascetic, felt coerced into giving

[1] Māḍhav, v. 87. None of Māḍhav's details are to be found in Ānanḍagiri, where we have but two lines on this subject altogether, p. 17.

her consent. Shaṅkarāchārya thereupon came out of the river, and confiding her to the care of relatives and friends, and telling her he would come back to her whenever she should need his presence, he went away, and took up the career for which he had so strong a natural bent.

As if drawn by some irresistible magnetic attraction towards a certain spot, Shaṅkara travelled for several days, through forests, over hills, by towns, and across rivers, yet, all the while unconscious of all, and oblivious to the men and beasts that went by him on his way, and arrived at the cave in a hill on the banks of the Nerbudda, where Govinḍ Yaṭi had fixed his hermitage. After the usual preliminaries, the sage accepted the lad as a pupil, and taught him the Brahman out of the four great sentences—Knowledge is Brahman; This soul is Brahman; Thou art That; and I am Brahman[1]. It is related by Māḍhav, that immediately after he had entered upon this discipleship,

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[1] The originals are: प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म ॥ अयमात्माब्रह्म ॥ तत्त्वमसि ॥ अहंब्रह्मास्मि.

one day when his guru was immersed in contemplation, or, as we should say, Ḍhāraṇa, by pronouncing certain mystic verses, Shaṅkara performed the miracle of quelling a furious tempest of rain accompanied by awful thunder and lightning. Hearing, upon returning to consciousness of external things, what his illustrious pupil had done, Govinḍ Nāṭha was overjoyed, as this very event had been foretold to him by Vyāsa at a sacrifice celebrated, long before, by the sage Aṭri. Bestowing his benediction upon Shaṅkara, he bade him go to holy Benares and receive there the blessing of the Deity.

> On thy glorious work
> Then enter, and begin to save mankind.[1]

Thus admonished, Shaṅkara proceeded to Benares, where, after a residence of some months, he is said to have received his first pupil Sananḍana—the same who afterwards became celebrated as his greatest favourite, under the title of Paḍmapāḍa. I confess to a doubt of the

[1] Māḍhav, v. 53—61.

accuracy of this date, though I quote the circumstance from Mādḥav's book, for it does seem impossible that Shaṅkara should have begun to get pupils at such a very tender age as, upon Mādḥav's own showing, he must have reached at the time. However, be this as it may, Paḍmapāḍa was duly enrolled as a disciple at Benares, and there most of the others also joined him.

In his twelfth year Shaṅkara removed to Baḍari, on the banks of the Ganges, where he composed his masterpiece, the commentary on the *Brahma Sūṭras*. Here also, he wrote the commentary on the Upaniṣhaṭs, on the *Bhagavaḍ-Gīṭā*, on the *Nṛsimhaṭāpani* (so called by Mādḥav), and on the *Sanaṭ-sujāṭiya*, besides other works. He then taught his great commentary to his numerous pupils, but always reserving his greatest powers of instruction for Paḍmapāḍa. This excited envy in the breasts of the other pupils, to dispel which, Shaṅkara, once standing on one shore of the river which flowed by his residence, called to Paḍmapāḍa to come over to him directly from the opposite bank. The latter obeyed, and dauntlessly

walked over on the surface of the waters, which sent up a lotus at each step he took. It was on this occasion that the name Paḍmapāḍa was given him by Shaṅkara, as he warmly embraced him in recognition of his enthusiastic devotion.

While teaching his pupils, the youthful teacher did not fail to make adversaries among the learned men who held tenets different to his own, but he always came off victor. He drew, says Mādhav, from the arsenal of a vast Veḍic learning, the weapons with which to combat his powerful assailants. We are treated to a description of an eight days' debate between himself and Vyāsa, who appeared under the guise of an aged Brāhmaṇa, but whose identity was intuitively recognised, at least by Paḍmapāḍa. The biographer tells us that the spirit, in his assumed guise of the living Brāhmaṇa, propounded a thousand objections to Shaṅkara's great Bhāshya on the *Brahma Sūṭras*, which were all triumphantly answered, and in the end gave the latter an extension of sixteen years of life over and above the set term of sixteen that he was

to have lived, and after bidding him undertake a refutation of all the other philosophic systems in vogue, blessed him and then disappeared.

After this, Shaṅkara set out for Prayāga in search of Bhatta Kumarila, whom he wished to ask to write vārṭikas on his Bhāshya, but found that he was upon the point of self-cremation, in disgust with the world. Vainly entreating him to reconsider his determination, Shaṅkara nevertheless was permitted to explain his commentaries, which Kumarila praised unstintingly; and after the latter had accomplished his act of self-immolation, Shaṅkara proceeded on to Mahiṣhmaṭi, the city where, as Kumarila had informed him, he would find Mandana Mishra, who would undertake the work Shaṅkara had requested him to perform. Arrived at the place, he was directed to the sage's house by parrots, miraculously endowed with human speech, and able to discuss most recondite questions of philosophy. He found the house, but found it closed, so that to obtain entrance he had to raise himself up into the air and alight, a *deus ex machina*, in Mandana's

hall. An animated and, at first, even acrimonious, discussion ensued between the host and his unexpected and unwelcome guest, the two finally deciding to make the wife of Mandana Mishra umpire between them. But she, having other matters to attend to, gave each a garland, stipulating that he should be deemed vanquished whose garland withered. I will not attempt, in such time and space as I now command, to even epitomise this wonderful debate, but refer the reader to Mādhav (vii. 34) for particulars, adding that they will richly repay study. Shaṅkara won, and in winning, under the terms of the debate, claimed his antagonist as a disciple and required him to abandon the domestic life and become an ascetic. He consented, and the wife—who was an incarnation of Sarasvaṭī, as we are told—started for the other world. But before she had quite departed she was prevailed upon by Shaṅkara to tarry while he should hold debate with her also. Then commenced the second discussion, but the ready answers of the former to all questions put to him foiled Sarasvaṭī, as she may now be

called, until she struck into a path to which Shaṅkara was a total stranger. She asked him a question on the Science of Love. He was of course, unable to answer it at once, being a Sannyāsi and a celibate all his life; so he craved a respite of one month, which being granted, he left Mahiṣhmaṭi.

The question of Sarasvaṭī as to the true nature of Love must be answered though he were ten times a Yogi or Sannyāsi, so Shaṅkara journeyed on to find the means of learning the truth. As he was going out with his pupils, they met the corpse of a certain king named Amaraka (or Amṛṭapura), to the west of Mandana Mishra's city, according to Ānanḍagiri,[1] lying at the foot of a tree in the forest surrounded by men and women mourning his death. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Shaṅkara entrusted his own body to the charge of his pupils, and caused his soul to enter the corpse of the king. The supposed resuscitation which followed delighted the people, and King Shaṅkara was taken in triumph from

[1] Ananḍagiri, 244.

the forest of death to the throne of royalty[1].

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[1] This incident is too important to pass by without editorial comments. The power of the Yogi to quit his own body and enter and animate that of another person, though affirmed by Paṭañjali and included among the Siḍḍhīs of Kṛshṇa, is discredited by Europeanised young Indians. Naturally enough, since, as western biologists deny a soul to man, it is an unthinkable proposition to them that the Yogi's soul should be able to enter another's body. That such an unreasoning infidelity should prevail among the pupils of European schools, is quite reason enough why an effort should be made to revive in India those schools of Psychology in which the Āryan youth were theoretically and practically taught the occult laws of man and nature. We, who have at least some trifling acquaintance with modern science, do not hesitate to affirm our belief that this temporary transmigration of souls is possible. We may even go so far as to say that the phenomenon has been experimentally proved to us—in New York, among other places. And, since we would be among the last to require so marvellous a statement to be accepted upon any one's unsupported testimony, we urge our readers to first study Āryan literature, and then get from personal experience the corroborative evidence. The result must inevitably be to satisfy every honest enquirer that Paṭañjali and Shaṅkarāchārya did, and Tyndall, Carpenter and Huxley do not, know the secrets of our being.—Ed. *Theosophist*. H.P.B.

There, King Shaṅkara, standing as it were in the shoes of Amaraka and indeed Amaraka himself so far as the eye could discern, and passing as such, learned practically all that pertained to the science and art of Love, and fitted himself to answer the query of the cunning wife of Mandana. He also studied the theory of the subject in Vāṭsyāyana, and made progress enough to write an original treatise upon it himself[1]. Meanwhile, however, the ministers of the state finding their resuscitated rājā a far wiser and better man than ever before, suspected that there had been some transmigration of souls, and so, *to prevent the return of this intruder to his own body, secretly issued an order that all corpses in the city should be burnt;* but they took good care that the order should not come to the knowledge of the king[2].

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[1] Māḍhav, x. 18.

[2] Paṇḍiṭ Rāmasvāmi says that the order was issued by the Queen herself, and in this the paṇḍiṭ is at one with Ānanḍagiri who also makes the Queen suspect the fact (p. 245) and makes no allusion to the ministers.

In the meantime the pupils of Shaṅkara who had charge of his body, finding that the limit of time fixed by him for his return had already been passed, grew very uneasy. While the others were given up to their grief, Paḍmapāḍa suggested a plan which was unanimously adopted, and they started out to discover the whereabouts of their preceptor. The stories of Māḍhav and Ānanḍagiri do not agree as to this quest of the pupils after their master, the former making them wander from province to province, while the latter tells us that Shaṅkara's body was deposited in the outskirts of the King's own city. In fact, Māḍhav himself elsewhere describes the circumstances of Shaṅkara's soul not finding the body in the appointed place, then animating it on the funeral pyre, and Shaṅkara's then returning with his pupils to Mandana as a work of but short duration; but we are interrupting the sequence of our narrative. Paḍmapāḍa's plan was for them to first discover the whereabouts of their master, and then, gaining access to his presence under the disguise of singers, express to

him their sorrow at his absence and recall him to his own body and to the prosecution of his labours. Arrived at King Amaraka's city, they heard the story of the preternatural resuscitation, and satisfied that they were on the right track, carried out their affectionate plot. Their music not only held the audience spell-bound, but reached the inner consciousness of Shaṅkara in his borrowed body. He dismissed the singers, retransferred himself to his own body, and left the empty rājā to die once more, and this time effectually. He found his own body already amid the flames, but having his armour of proof against fire it was uninjured, and he rejoined his devoted pupils, singing the praises of Nṛsimha. Returning to the residence of Mandana, Sarasvaṭī was answered and Mandana Mishra converted to Veḍānṭism.

Travelling southwards, Shaṅkara published his works in Maharāṣhtra, and took up his residence at Shrīshaila, where a strange proposal was made to him. A Kāpālika called on him and besought him to give him his head, which he said he wanted to

offer up as a sacrifice as he had been promised by Mahāḍeva a residence in Kailāsa in his human body, if he offered up the head of either a king or an omniscient person. Shaṅkara agreed on condition that the Kāpālika should come for it without the knowledge of his pupils, who might interfere. This was done, but before the decapitation could be effected, Paḍmapāḍa learnt the thing through his interior consciousness, and assuming the form of a man-lion fell upon the Kāpālika, and rent him joint by joint. He had then to be appeased and brought back to himself.

The next miracle attributed to Shaṅkara was the bringing back to life at Gokarṇa of a child greatly beloved by its parents. (Māḍhav, xii. 24). To Srivali—where he got a new pupil in the person of Hasṭāmalaka, a lad supposed to be an idiot, but in fact something very different—and Shṛngagiri, he then went. At the latter place Mandana Mishra, who had taken the name of Sureshvar (see page 251 of Ānanḍagiri, whose account leaves it a matter of doubt as to the identity of Mandana with Sureshvar) wrote

at Shaṅkara's command an independent treatise on Brahman, which surprised the other pupils and equally pleased the master.

At this time Shaṅkara learning in some supernatural way [1] of his mother's being at the point of death, hastened to her side, and at her request for spiritual counsel instructed her or rather attempted to instruct her in the formless Brahman. She could not comprehend his teaching, but he tranquillised her mind until the moment of her dissolution. His relatives refused to aid him in performing the usual funeral ceremonies on the ground that he, being an ascetic, was not competent to perform the offices in question. Hereupon he produced a fire from his right hand, wherewith he burned the corpse. (Māḍhav, 29–56).

At this time, Paḍmapāḍa, who had been absent on a pilgrimage, returned and told

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[1] We must take issue with our distinguished contributor upon this point. We do not believe in "supernatural ways," and we do believe and know that it was not at all difficult for an Initiate like Shaṅkara to learn by his interior faculties of his mother's state.—Ed. *Theosophist.* (H. P. Blavatsky.)

Shaṅkara how a commentary on the Bhāshya which he had composed and deposited with his uncle when he went on his pilgrimage was destroyed by that person, as it contained a refutation of the doctrines he held. To the great joy of Paḍmapāḍa, Shaṅkara dictated the whole from memory, as he had once read it himself, and from his dictation Paḍmapāḍa rewrote it. Rājashekhar, also, who had lost his dramas, had them dictated to him in the same manner.

And now, accompanied by his pupils and by King Suḍhanvan, Shaṅkara started on his tour of intellectual conquest. The *redargutio philosophiarum*, which Vyāsa had suggested to him, and for which his original lease of life had been extended, now commenced. He first directed his steps towards the Sheṭu—the Bridge—then passing through the countries of the Pāṇḍyas, the Cholas, and the Ḍravidas, he went to Kañchi where he erected a temple and established the system of the adoration of Ḍevi. Having then favoured with a visit the people called Āṇḍhras, and having looked in at the seat of Veṅkatāchalēsha, he proceeded to the country

of the Vidarbhas. On hearing that Shaṅkara wished to go into the Karnāta country, the king of the Vidarbhas warned him of the mischievous character of the people generally, and of their envy and hatred of Shaṅkara particularly. Shaṅkara went into that country nevertheless, and the first person of note he came across was a Kāpālika named Krakacha, whose exposition of his own doctrines so disgusted all who heard it that Sudhanvan caused him with all his followers to be ignominiously driven away. They went breathing vengeance and returned armed in hundreds. They were however destroyed by king Sudhanvan—all but the first Kāpālika Krakacha, who came up to Shaṅkara, and addressed him saying: "Now taste the fruit of thy deeds". He then prayed to Bhairava and, as soon as he appeared, asked him to destroy the destroyers of his followers. But Bhairava killed Krakacha himself, exclaiming "Dost thou offend even me?"

Onward went Shaṅkara to the western ocean, and to Gokarṇa, where he vanquished Nīlakantha, a philosopher who thought himself perfectly invincible. Shaṅkara thence went

into the Saurāṣhtra country and published his Bhāṣhya there. Then he went to Ḍvāravaṭi or Ḍvāraka and thence to Ujjayini where he challenged and conquered Bhatta-bhāskar. Thence he went "conquering and to conquer" into the countries of the Bāhlikas, Bhāraṭas, Shūrasenas, Kurus, Ḍaradas, Pāñchālas and so forth. In the country of the Kāmarūpas, Shaṅkara encountered and defeated Abhinavagupṭa, a doctor of the Sākṭa school. Having, however, more worldly wisdom than philosophy or love of truth, and finding that he could not compete with Shaṅkara, that personage got his pupils to hide his works for a period, and passed himself off as belonging to Shaṅkara's school, all the while maturing a plot of which the sequel will be presently narrated.

The north thus disposed of, and accepting the respect and veneration of the Viḍehas, the Kosalas, the Aṅgas and the Baṅgas, Shaṅkar went into the country of the Ganḍas. It was then that the nefarious designs of the discomfited doctor of the Sākṭa School culminated. Shaṅkara suddenly

caught the disease called Bhagaṇḍara,[1] which had been sent upon him by the necromantic spells of Abhinavagupṭa, who had performed a special sacrifice to accomplish his malicious plot. The greatest physicians attended on Shaṅkara, but in vain. Meanwhile the patient himself behaved stoically, or rather veḍānṭically. But at last when the disease could not be cured, he prayed to Mahāḍeva, to send down the Ashvinikumārs, who were accordingly sent down disguised as Brāhmaṇas. But they pronounced the disease to be beyond their powers of cure as it was caused by the act of another. On this communication the anger of Paḍmapāḍa once more came to the relief of the Veḍānṭism of Shaṅkara. For, though dissuaded by Shaṅkara himself, he muttered some mystic incantations which transferred the disease to Abhinavagupṭa himself, who died of it.[2]

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[1] A terrible form of ulcerated sore, or fistula.—Ed. *Theosophist.*

[2] Māḍhav, xvi. 22—23. An important point for the student of occult science is here made and should not be overlooked. The law of physics, that action and reaction tend to equilibrate each other, holds in

About this time Shaṅkara heard of a temple in Kāshmīr, which none but an all-knowing person could open, which had been opened on its northern, eastern and western side, but which had continued closed till then on its southern side. Shaṅkara accordingly went up to the temple, but the controversialists there would not allow him to enter before they examined him. He

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the realm of the occult. This has been fully explained in *Isis Unveiled* and other works of the kind. A current of Ākāsha, directed by a sorcerer at a given object with an evil intent, must either be propelled by such intensity of will as to break through every obstacle and overpower the resistent will of the selected victim, or it will rebound against the sender, and afflict him or her in the same way that it was intended the other should be hurt. So well is this law understood that it has been preserved to us in many popular proverbs, such as the English ones, 'curses come home to roost,' 'the biter bit,' etc. The Italian one 'La bestemia gira, e gira, e gira, e torna adosso a che la tira,' etc. This reversal of a maleficent current upon the sender may be greatly facilitated by the friendly interference of another person who knows the secret of controlling the Ākāshic currents—if it is permissible for us to coin a new word that will soon be wanted in the western parlance.—Ed. *Theosophist*. (H. P. Blavatsky.)

was examined accordingly, and was found as one may say, not wanting. He then entered, but as he was going to take his seat on the stool within, the Goddess of the temple—Sarasvaṭī—said: "Your omniscience has been already more than sufficiently proved; but omniscience is not enough to entitle you to take your seat on this stool. Continence is also necessary. Bethink yourself of your acts, and say whether you can claim it under these circumstances." Shaṅkara replied: "This body is perfectly pure. It cannot be tarnished by the sins of another body." This was of course, a clincher, and Shaṅkara took his seat on the coveted stool[1]!

He thence went to the hermitage of Ṛishyasṛṅga, and, after staying there for some time, to Baḍari. There he taught his Bhāshya to some persons who were studying in the Pāṭañjala School of philosophy. Thence he proceeded to Keḍāra—where he prayed to Mahāḍeva to send down warm water for his benumbed pupils. That was,

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[1] Māḍhav, xvi. 86.

of course, done; and Mādhav says the river still flows with hot water in that part of the country.[1]

He now arrived at the close of his thirty-second year, and his term of life being over all the Gods and all the Siddhās and all the Sages came down in divine vehicles to escort him up to heaven. As soon as Shaṅkara made up his mind, his vehicle appeared for him, and then "with his praises sung by the principal deities, headed by Indra and Upendra, and worshipped with heavenly flowers, supported by the arm of the Lotus-born God, he mounted his excellent Bull, and exhibiting his knots of hair with their ornament, the moon, he started for his own residence, hearing the word 'victory'! uttered by the sages."[2]

This does seem too materialistic and non-vedāntic. Ānandagiri has the following account: "Once in the city of Kañchi, the place of absolution, as he was seated, he

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[1] Mādhav, xvi. 101. According to Ānandagiri the prayer for hot water was made to Nārāyaṇa, p. 235.

[2] Mādhav, xvi. 107.

absorbed his gross body into the subtle one and became existence; then, destroying the subtle one into the body which is the cause (of the world) became 'pure intelligence'; and then (assuming the) size of a thumb, and attaining in the world of Īshvara full happiness (unbroken) like a perfect circle, he became the intelligence which pervades the whole universe. And he still exists in the form of the all-pervading intelligence. The Brāhmaṇas of the place, and his pupils, and their pupils reciting the Upaniṣhaṭs, the *Gīṭā*, and the *Brahma Sūṭras*, then excavated a ditch in a very clean spot and offering to his body pigment, rice, etc., raised a tomb over it there."[1]

And here ends the story of the life of Shaṅkarāchārya. As I look back over the narrative thus given by me after Māḍhav, methinks I hear the genius of nineteenth century scepticism whisper in my ears: "All this is an absurd fable from first to last; it is the 'tinsel clink of compliment,' to one whom a halo of glory surrounds.

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[1] Ānanḍagiri, p. 280.

At the age of two it is impossible to have learnt what Shaṅkara is said to have learnt; those miracles, which he is reported to have performed, are 'mere and sheer' impossibilities—in a word, all Mādhav's narrative is fitter for the pages of a romance than of a work professing to be historical." Now though I confess that I do believe there is some force in this argument, I must also affirm that I am not prepared to give it as much weight as those who propound it seem to claim for it. I am perfectly willing to grant that there is a considerable menstruum of poetry in this narrative: but I am not prepared to say that it is as much as may at first sight appear. Even in the sceptical nineteenth century, we have had accounts of historical personages, given as history, which bear in some points a very striking resemblance to Mādhav's account of Shaṅkarāchārya. I shall put forward two very good instances in point which occur to me at this moment. Dr. Thomas Brown, a man who flourished in this nineteenth century, a man whose life has been written by a

prosaic westerner not guilty of Oriental hyperboles, is said to have been engaged in the fourth year of his age in comparing the narratives of the evangelists in order to find out any discrepancies that there might be between them. To appreciate the full force of this example, it must be remembered that this critical spirit was brought to bear upon a work, on which an opinion out of the common rut would be downright heresy. This circumstance, I may mention, is recorded in the memoir of Dr. Brown, prefixed to his eloquent lectures on the Philosophy of Mind.[1]

Mr. John Morley, the present Editor of *The Fortnightly Review*, has contributed to the pages of that publication a valuable life of Turgot. Here is his deliverance on the precocity of the subject of his memoir. "It has been justly said of him that he passed at once from infancy to manhood, and was in the rank of sages before he had shaken off the dust of the play-ground."[2]

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[1] See also *The Contemporary Review*, June, 1872, Robert Leslie Ellis, Professor Grote.

[2] *The Fortnightly Review*, August, 1869.

If more authority is necessary for refusing to subscribe to the theory that every statement which appears wonderful is, at once, and by reason of its being wonderful, to be put down as totally false, we have the authority of that prince of philosophic historians, Mr. George Grote. "In separating," says that great authority upon all matters of historic criticism, "between the marvellous and the ordinary, there is no security that we are dividing the fictitious from the real."[1] And not to depend on the *ipse dixit* even of a Grote, I would refer the sceptic to the wonders of science, which are "truths stranger than fiction," which yet we see performed before our eyes. Before the fact, what would one have thought of the electric telegraph? Before the fact, what was thought of the Railway? I would ask the sceptic to pause here, to consider these matters fully from this point of view, before at once arguing: "these circumstances are wonderful; *ergo*, they are impossible." They

[1] See, too, the Duke of Somerset's recent book on *Christianity and Scepticism*, p. 46, and the Duke of Argyll's *Reign of Law*, *passim*.

are not of a piece with the common run of occurrences; I am willing to concede also that they may be much exaggerated. But when I am told that no reasonable man can believe them, then I demur. I rather choose to hold myself in suspense.

I had intended in this paper to say something about the works of Shaṅkarāchārya, and about some other matters connected with him. But want of time and the length to which this paper has already extended, have prevented me from incorporating those necessary portions of a biography into the present paper. I hope, however, in another paper to treat of those matters, as leisure and the materials accessible to me will permit.

NOTE A

According to Ānanḍagiri, Shaṅkara does not seem to have left his birth-place, before taking the Sanyāsa, and when he left the place, he had already got numbers of pupils. He first went from Chiḍambarapur southward to Maḍhyārjuna (p. 19) where he converted the people to adualism by a miracle (p. 20). Thence he proceeded to Rāmēshvar near the Sheṭu, where he stayed for two months, defeating the representatives of various sects who entered into controversies with him (p. 21). Then he went to Ananṭashayana where he remained for one month (p. 51). Travelling westwards, he reached the town of Subrahmaṇya in fifteen days (p. 81). Proceeding thence in a north-westerly direction, he went to the town of Ganavara and sojourned there for a month (p. 102), thence to Bhavānīnāgara (p. 122), where he stayed for a month, and held discussions with the sectaries of the neighbouring towns of Kuvalayapur and others (p. 127). From that town he went northward to Ujjayini where he remained for two months (p. 138), thence in a north-westerly direction to the city of Anumalla (p. 160) where he spent twenty-one days. Going westward next to the town of Arundh (p. 164), and northward from that to Magaḍhapura (p. 170), he went on first to Indraprasṭha (p. 174), and then to Yamaprasṭha, whence, after staying there for a month (p. 178), he proceeded to Prayāga at "the confluence of the Ganges, the Jumna and the Sarasvaṭī" (p. 184). Going eastward thence, in "half a fortnight," he reached Kāshī (p. 205), and after staying there for some time, he went northward to Baḍarī by the

route of Kurukṣhetra (p. 235). Having next seen Ḍvaraka and other heaven-like places, he went to Ayoḍhya, thence to Gaya, and thence to Parvaṭa by the route of Jagannāṭh (p. 235). After a month he proceeded to Ruḍḍhapura, where he saw Kumarila (p. 236) and northward thence to a very famous seat of learning—Vijayabinḍu—situated towards the south-east of Hasṭināpura (p. 238). Having there vanquished Mandana Mishra, and established a college near Sṛṅgapura on the banks of the Ṭuṅga-bhaḍra he stayed there for twelve months (p. 251), after which he proceeded to Ahobala, thence to Vaikalvagiri, and thence to the town of Kāñchi, where, within a month of his arrival, he founded Sivakāñchi and Viṣhṇukāñchi (p. 251). Here his soul left off this mortal coil. But before this end, he is said to have authorised five of his principal pupils to found the Shaiva, Vaiṣhṇava, Saiva, Soura, Ganapatya systems of worship. (p. 264 *et seq.*)

NOTE B

I must confess that even after a great deal of time and labour spent upon the work, I am as far as ever from being able to comprehend the geography of the tour of Shaṅkarāchārya as related by Ānanḍagiri and abstracted in the last note. Many of the names cannot be found noted in our modern maps. The only point worth noting is perhaps this, that Chiḍambar, which is mentioned by Ānanḍagiri as Shaṅkara's birthplace, may be Chillumbrum (so-called in the map), a place to the south of Porto Novo.

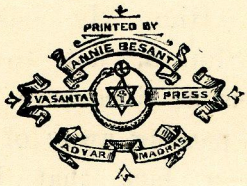
The account of Mādhav is somewhat better, but there are difficulties. Thus, though his progress through the countries of the Pāṇḍyas, the Cholas, and the Ḍravidas, to Kāñchi, and thence to the country of the Āṇḍhras, may be understood, why should he go up as far as the country of the Viḍarbhas—identified with Berar—and then return to the Karnatic districts? What follows, however, is not very hard to understand. It may, perhaps, be worth while to mention some of the names which have been identified. The knowledge may not be new to those who have studied the subject, but it may be new to those who have not looked into it as it was to myself. Mahiṣhmaṭi is mentioned in *Raghuvamsha* (vi. 43) as situated on the Narmaḍa. It is also mentioned in Māgha (ii. 64) as the city of Shishupāla, and it is identified in Mr. Garret's recent dictionary with Chuli Maheshvar. The Pāṇḍya country embraces the Tinnevelly and Madura districts; the Chola country is the Coromandel Coast, southward from Godavari and eastward from the hills at Naṇḍiḍurg (Elphinstone's *India*, fifth Edition, p. 239); the Ḍravida country about Madras up to Bangalore on the west (Elphinstone, p. 231). The Āṇḍhra country is about Warangol and forms part of Teliṅgāna. The country of the Viḍarbhas is Berar; that of the Sūrasenas is Maṭhura; that of the Karmarupas is the east of Hiṇḍūsṭan; that of the Viḍehas, Miṭhila; Kosalas, Oudh; Aṅgas, north-west of Bengal Proper. Iṇḍraprasṭha is near Delhi. The probable situation of Chiḍambara has been already stated, and that of Shṛṅgeri is well-known. Sasala-grām, mentioned above, I cannot find. May it not

be the 'Sallagrāma' in the Mysore province; or, perhaps, what is called 'Sosilly' in Cassel's Atlas, also situated in the same province? As to Kālat mentioned by Māḍhav, I can say nothing at all. I may add here that it appears to me to be very probable that Māḍhav did not regard Shṛṅgeri as Shaṅkara's birthplace, for in xiv. 29, he makes Shaṅkara leave Shṛṅgeri in order to see his mother in her last moments, and is then described as flying through space, while she herself, for aught that appears to the contrary, continued to remain at the town of his birth, where he had left her in charge of relatives.

NOTE

From the occult standpoint the first Shrī Shaṅkarāchārya was a Being far above our race, one of the Three Kumāras immediately below the GREAT INITIATOR, spoken of in *The Secret Doctrine*, and in closest relation with Him. He belongs to the humanity of Shukra, not to that of our earth. He became incarnate about eighty years after the passing away of Gauṭama, the Lord Buḍḍha—a fact that is historically recorded only in the archives of the Dwāraka Maṭṭ. Some hints about Him may be found in the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, but they are very confused and perhaps purposely made contradictory; they will be found in the Section on 'The Mystery of Buḍḍha.'

ANNIE BESANT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